

Message Text

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FOR HODDING CARTER FROM S/PRS - FRED BROWN

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TAGS: SOPN, OVIP (VANCE, CYRUS R.)

SUBJECT: NEW YORK TIMES EDITORIAL ON ARMS SALES

NO. 10

1. HEREWITH FULL TEXT OF NEW YORK TIMES LEAD EDITORIAL
MAY 8 ENTITLED "ARMS SALES: ANOTHER WOBBLING PROMISE".

2. AS A CANDIDATE, JIMMY CARTER USED TO ASSAIL HIS PREDE-
CESSOR FOR HIS "UNSAVORY" AND "-YNICAL" ROLE AS "THE
WORLD'S LEADING ARMS SALESMAN." WITHIN DAYS OF MOVING
INTO THE WHITE HOUSE, MR. CARTER SPOKE AGAIN OF "THE
NECESSITY FOR REDUCING ARMS SALES." THE STATE DEPARTMENT
AND OTHER AGENCIES WERE SENT A "TASKING MEMORANDUM" WITH
ALLEGEDLY "JOLTING QUESTIONS" ABOUT HOW TO CARRY OUT THE
PRESIDENT'S WISH. WASHINGTON'S MOUNTAIN OF A BUREAUCRACY
LABORED FOR THREE MONTHS AND IT APPEARS TO HAVE PRODUCED A
MOUSE.

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3. MR. CARTER, ONE GATHERS, IS BEING ASKED TO BECOME THE
WORLD'S LEADING RELUCTANT ARMS SALESMAN. THE GOAL OF HIS
ADMINISTRATION, IT SEEMS, SHOU'D BE MERELY TO "SLOW THE
GROWTH" OF AMERICAN ARMS EXPORTS AND TO TRY TO PERSUADE
OTHER SELLERS AS WELL AS BUYERS TO ADOPT A SIMILAR RE-
STRAINT, OR AT LEAST RELUCTANCE. THE GOVERNMENT
COMMITTEES THAT WEIGHED THE PROBLEM EVIDENTLY HAD SOME
DISCUSSION ABOUT CUTTING FUTURE SALES BY 25 PERCENT FROM
THE PRESENT LEVEL, AND CONCLUDED THAT A REDUCTION OF EVEN
10 OR 15 PERCENT BY 1980 WOULD BE "UNREALISTIC." ON THE

HARDEST QUESTION--WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE \$32 BILLION IN ARMS ORDERS ALREADY APPROVED BY THE FORD AND NIXON ADMINISTRATIONS AND SET FOR SHIPMENT OVER THE NEXT SIX YEARS--THE ADMINISTRATION SEEMS READY TO SETTLE FOR THE ARGUMENT THAT IT CANNOT "RENEGE" ON CONTRACTS. THAT, PRESUMABLY, WOULD BE "UNSAVORY" OR "CYNICAL."

4. YET MR. CARTER HAD NO SUCH QUALMS, AND RIGHTLY SO, IN ASKING FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY TO CANCEL THEIR CONTRACTS TO SELL PLUTONIUM REPROCESSING PLANTS TO PAKISTAN AND BRAZIL. THE DANGEROUS LEVEL OF AMERICAN ARMS SALES, THOUGH LESS DRAMATIC THAN OUR ALLIES' EXPORT OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS KNOW-HOW, ARGUES FOR MORE SERIOUS CONSIDERATION OF REDUCTIONS, IN BOTH PAST AND FUTURE DEALS.

5. MOST UNITED STATES ARMS EXPORTS GO TO THE DEVELOPING WORLD, AND IN PARTICULAR TO THE MIDDLE EAST. THAT AREA, WHICH PLACED TWO-THIRDS OF THE ORDERS RECEIVED IN RECENT YEARS, ACCOUNTS FOR THE EXTRAORDINARY THREE-FOLD INCREASE IN TOTAL AMERICAN WEAPONS SALES SINCE 1972, TO MORE THAN \$9 BILLION ANNUALLY. IN THAT PERIOD, IRAN CONTRACTED FOR \$11 BILLION WORTH OF ARMS, THE ARAB COUNTRIES FOR \$10 BILLION AND ISRAEL FOR \$4 BILLION.

6. THERE IS OBVIOUSLY GOOD REASON TO SELL ALLIES AND
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FRIENDLY COUNTRIES THE ARMS THEY NEED TO DEFEND THEMSELVES AGAINST SOVIET-SUPPLIED ENEMIES. BUT DEFENSE CAN BE ACHIEVED AT VARYING LEVELS AND, BY MOST OBJECTIVE EVALUATIONS, LEAVES ROOM FOR CONSIDERABLE PRUNING. THE TROUBLE IS THAT DEMANDS FOR MORE ARMS ARE NOW BEING STIMULATED BY AMERICAN AS WELL AS SOVIET SHIPMENTS; ISRAEL AND ITS POTENTIAL ARAB ADVERSARIES AND THE PERSIAN GULF RIVALS, IRAN AND SAUDI ARABIA, ARE ALL EYEING EACH OTHER'S ARSENALS AND SEEKING EVER MORE FOR THEMSELVES.

7. IT IS ARGUED THAT ARMS SALES ENHANCE AMERICAN DIPLOMATIC INFLUENCE IN COUNTRIES SUCH AS SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN. BUT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT AMERICAN INFLUENCE CANNOT BE PRESERVED AT LOWER LEVELS OF SALES. INDEED, PARTICULARLY IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THAT INFLUENCE OUGHT TO BE USED TO RETARD LOCAL ARMS RACES, NOT TO INFLAME THEM. AT THE PRESENT PACE, WE RISK NOT ONLY EVER HIGHER LEVELS OF VIOLENCE IN POSSIBLE WARS BUT ALSO THE TURNOVER OF MASSIVE ARSENALS TO THE FUTURE QADDAFIS, AMINS OR CASTROS WHO MAY IN ONE PLACE OR ANOTHER SEIZE POWER FROM OUR TRUSTED CUSTOMERS.

8. IT IS ALSO ARGUED THAT ECONOMICS REQUIRE THE PRESENT MAGNITUDES OF SALE. THE INITIAL IMPULSE FOR STEPPED-UP MERCHANDISING BY THE PENTAGON WAS THE NIXON ADMINISTRATIONS'S DESIRE TO REDUCE BALANCE-OF-PAYMENTS DEFICITS.

THE OIL-PRICE INCREASES ADDED TO THAT PRESSURE AND SIMULTANEOUSLY MADE AVAILABLE VAST NEW WEALTH IN THE MIDDLE EAST. WITH SALES GREATLY INCREASED, IT IS NOW ARGUED THAT CUTBACKS WOULD COST JOBS IN THE AMERICAN ECONOMY. IT IS ALSO ARGUED THAT INCREASED ARMS PRODUCTION IN THE UNITED STATES BRINGS ECONOMIES OF SCALE THAT REDUCE THE UNIT COSTS OF WEAPONS FOR OUR OWN FORCES.

9. THE ARGUMENTS OF DIPLOMACY AND ECONOMICS HAVE CLEARLY OVERRUN THE MOST PRUDENT CALCULATIONS OF OUR TRUE NATIONAL INTEREST, OUR HOPE FOR A MORE STABLE WORLD AND GREATER
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ECONOMIC RATHER THAN MILITARY STRENGTH IN THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. ONLY BY VIGOROUSLY REASSERTING THIS INTEREST WILL PRESIDENT CARTER ACHIEVE THE VISION OF HIS CANDIDACY.

10. PRESENT AS WELL AS FUTURE ARMS CONTRACTS NEED TO BE MEASURED AGAINST A MORE RIGOROUS STANDARD. SALES SHOULD CORRESPOND TO THE REASONABLE DEFENSE NEEDS OF THE PURCHASING NATIONS. THEY SHOULD NOT INVOLVE THE NEWEST AND MOST SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS SYSTEMS, NEW EVEN TO AMERICAN FORCES; SUCH EXPORTS JEOPARDIZE THE SECRECY OF AMERICAN WEAPONS TECHNOLOGY AND ALSO REQUIRE THE CONTINUING PRESENCE OF THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN TECHNICIANS AND ADVISORS, WHO COULD EASILY BECOME INVOLVED IN REGIONAL CONFLICTS.

11. MR. CARTER MIGHT CONSIDER REGIONAL QUOTAS TO PUSH THE PACE OF SALES DOWNWARD. THE STATE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO JUDGE THE MERITS OF POTENTIAL SALES EVEN BEFORE PENTAGON SALESMEN MOVE OUT TO DRUM UP INTEREST IN THE LATEST WARES. OUR ALLIES, NOTABLY FRANCE AND BRITAIN, OUGHT TO BE INVITED TO SHARE THE MARKETS AND TO JOIN IN REDUCTIONS. THE RUSSIANS HAVE NOT SHOWN MUCH INTEREST IN NEGOTIATED LIMITS ON WEAPONS SALES, BUT THEY HAVE NOT BEEN PERSISTENTLY PRESSED, EITHER. MR. CARTER NEVER PROMISED IT WOULD BE EASY, ONLY THAT IT WAS NECESSARY.

END TEXT. CHRISTOPHER

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